

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9253

INFO AMEMBASSY MADRID

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 9188

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, AR, SP (EVA DUARTE PERON)

SUBJECT: MASS FOR EVA PERON

REF BA 9032

1. MASS FOR EVA PERON REQUESTED BY CGT "62" ORGANIZATIONS AND JUSTICIALISTA PARTY HELD LAST EVENING (DEC 19) IN NATIONAL CATHEDRAL. MASS WAS ATTENDED BY MRS PERON, LOPEZ REGA AND SEVERAL OTHER CABINET MINISTERS, INCLUDING FOREIGN MINISTER VIGNES, AND OTHER DIGNITARIES. VIRTUALLY AT LAST MINUTE, INVITATIONS WERE ISSUED TO DIPLOMATIC CORPS BY SPONSORS OF MASS, I.E. CGT, ETC. AMBASSADOR HILL ATTENDED AND INDICATES MRS PERON HANDLED HERSELF WITH POISE AND APPEARED TO BE IN GOOD HEALTH.

2. CROWD OUTSIDE CATHEDRAL WAS NOT LARGE, PROBABLY NO MORE THAN TWO THOUSAND. THIS SURPRISING IN VIEW FACT CENTRAL SECTION OF CITY HAD BEEN CLOSED OFF IN EXPECTATION LARGE CROWD. INTERESTING TO NOTE, TOO, THAT IN GIVING EULOGY, PRIEST ONLY MENTIONED EVA PERON BY NAME ONCE.

3. COMMENT. THERE HAS BEEN NO MORE THAN THIN TRICKLE OF FAITHFUL PAYING RESPECTS TO EVA PERON AT OLIVOS SINCE OPENED TO PUBLIC (SEE REFTEL), AND MANY OF THOSE WHO
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HAVE COME HAVE BEEN BROUGHT IN GROUPS BY VARIOUS

LABOR UNIONS. INITIAL CONCLUSION OF MOST OBSERVERS, THEN, WAS THAT MASS WAS DESIGNED TO STIMULATE MORE INTEREST IN FACT THAT EVA PERON'S REMAINS ARE AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC TO PAY RESPECTS. WELL-INFORMED PERONIST CONTACTS, HOWEVER, INDICATE THIS NOT QUITE THE CASE; RATHER, MASS WAS INDEED DEMANDED BY LABOR SECTOR, WHICH FELT THAT CEREMONIES AT AIRPORT HAD BEEN INSUFFICIENT AND THAT SOMETHING MORE WAS NEEDED TO MARK RETURN OF EVA PERON'S REMAINS TO HER HOMELAND. ACCORDING TO SOME, MRS PERON NOT PARTICULARLY ENTHUSIASTIC OVER IDEA OF HOLDING MASS, BUT WENT ALONG RATHER THAN RISK FURTHER AFFRONT TO LABOR SECTOR.

4. PAPAL NUNCIO (WHO PRIVY TO SOME INSIDE INFORMATION BECAUSE OF NEED TO ARRANGE RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES, RESTING PLACE IN CHAPEL, ETC. JUST PRIOR TO BODY'S RETURN) TOLD AMBASSADOR HILL YESTERDAY MORNING THAT LOPEZ REGA HAD MANAGED WHOLE AFFAIR, INCLUDING DECISION THAT BODY MUST BE RETURNED ON OR BEFORE NOV 17. AS LOPEZ REGA IS PRACTICING ASTROLOGER, IT MAY BE THAT DECISION RESULTED FROM NOTHING MORE SCIENTIFIC OR WELL CALCULATED THAN A READING OF THE STARS. IN ANY EVENT, NUNCIO SUGGESTED, RETURN HAD BEEN POORLY HANDLED AND GOVERNMENT STILL IN PROCESS OF TRYING TO PUT MATTER RIGHT--YESTERDAY'S MASS BEING ONE OF THE STEPS IN THE PROCESS.
HILL

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